Times dated the 13th February 1997, if so, Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) the steps being taken to bring down the coal prices?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH): (a) Subject to legislative changes, the Government have decided to offer new coal blocks, to the Indian Companies both in the public and private sectors, on the basis of competitive bidding. The bids will be invited only if legislative changes are enacted and the guidelines on bidding are formulated thereafter. Therefore, the question of receipt of proposals at this stage does not arise.

(b) Yes, Sir. The news item has rightly justified the phased deregulation of coal prices on the following grounds:—

(i) heavy budgetary support from the Government to the nationalised coal companies is no longer available.

(ii) to enable the nationalised coal companies to absorb the cost of production with the coal prices;

(iii) to enable the nationalised coal companies to generate adequate internal resources needed to run their coal mines efficiently as well as for exploring new areas.

(c) The price of coal is a function of productivity and efficiency in the utilisation of machines. This will improve with competition which will increase as a result of the proposal as at (a) above.

Coal requirements of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Manipur

2282. SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) the annual requirement of coal of the States of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Manipur for their industries;

(b) whether there is a gap between its demand and supply;

(c) if so, details thereof; and

(d) the steps taken by Government to supply adequate quantity of coal to the States of Manipur, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH): (a) The requirements of coal are assessed Industry/Sector-wise for the whole country. They are not assessed State-wise. Coal companies are supplying coal based on the programmes submitted by the consumers in accordance with the sponsorships issued by the respective sponsoring authorities and to the extent of their entitlement. Coal supplies to power and cement industries are made based on short-term linkages established by the Standing Linkage Committee. The total despatches to Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh for the year 1995-96 were 15.86 million tonnes and 41.39 million tonnes (Provisional) respectively. CIL is not separately maintaining data relating to despatches of c to Manipur.

(b) to (d) As a result of higher priority given for supply of coal to the power sector, and as a result of sharp increase in the demand of coal from this sector, supplies of coal to other sector consumers may have been affected. Coal companies are endeavouring to meet the requirements of coal of all consumers in the country including that of consumers in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Manipur. In addition, coal from a number of collieries is being offered under the Liberalised Sale Scheme (Modified) under which scheme coal is supplied without the requirement of linkages/sponsorships.

European Union's decision on Basmati Rice

2283. SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of basmati rice exported during last three years; year-wise and country-wise including the foreign exchange earned therefrom;